



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Female Offenders Begin New
Community Service Program in Ventura**
Many Civic and Service Organizations Are Partners

SACRAMENTO – Female juvenile offenders from the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility will continue their tradition of community service in a new county-wide program created in partnership with local civic and service organizations.

The Community Labor Experience and Responsibility (CLEAR) program will provide opportunities for female offenders to work on clean-up and light maintenance projects that benefit Ventura County communities and organizations, such as Catholic Charities, the Salvation Army and Project Understanding, which provides food and showers for the homeless. The CLEAR program's first project was launched last week, when the young women collected food donations for Food Share, a county-wide organization that provides food to low income residents, during a harvest celebration at the Ventura County Fairgrounds.

The women chosen for the CLEAR program are former fire fighters at the S. Carraway Public Service Center and Camp, adjacent to the youth correctional facility. In recent years, the number of female juvenile offenders committed to the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has declined. Only 10 females were enrolled in the fire fighting program, too few to maintain a full-sized crew. That prompted the creation of the CLEAR program.

"These are brave young women who volunteered to become wildland fire fighters as they work to change their lives," said Rachel Rios, Chief Deputy Secretary (A) for the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). "Their service protected the community and this training also teaches lessons in responsibility, accountability and discipline. The rewards of doing a job well helps them build confidence and character, which will assist them when they leave the DJJ," she noted. "Even though we were unable to continue the fire fighting program for these young women, we remain committed to community service as a way for all of our youth to make constructive contributions to society."

Through the first nine months of 2010, offender fire fighting crews from Ventura have contributed 39,670 hours of community service, 9,600 of which were contributed by the females who now make up the CLEAR program.

Since 1991, more than 700 female juvenile offenders have been trained as fire fighters at Ventura and many have gone on to seasonal or full time employment as forest fire fighters with CAL FIRE or the U.S. Department of Forestry.

The camp, which will continue to train firefighting crews for male juvenile offenders, will conduct a formal changing of the guard ceremony to mark the conclusion of the female fire fighting program on Wednesday, October 20.

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EDITORS NOTE: *Journalists planning to cover the event should contact the facility's Public Information Officer, Ms. Karett Fussell, (805) 485-7951, ext. 3256 to obtain the security clearance necessary to gain admission to the facility. Please note that cell phones are not permitted inside the facility. Denim clothing is also not permitted to be worn inside the facility.*

